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3 April 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

**SUBJECT: Presentation to the Clifford Board on my
Experience Thus Far as a Monitor of NRO
for the DCI, 2 April 1964**

1. Mr. Clifford opened the meeting stating that they had been in existence for three years, and that the NRO had been their major problem during that entire time. He gave me to understand that they already knew much of the background and hoped that I would begin with the current status. I stated that I had come into this area only recently and would have difficulty in adding historical perspective to the present situation, but thought I could give them a detailed insight of the result of my responsibilities during the last six months in the NRO.

2. I indicated that the DD/S&T job was accepted with much reservation, most of it founded on the NRO problem. I offered that much of Scoville's problem with the NRO was based on his trying to do three different jobs: DDNRO, DD/S&T and Director of Program B. I indicated that we decided last August that under the present ground rules I should take on the monitor responsibilities for the DCI in parallel with Dr. Fubini who carried these delegated responsibilities for McNamara. I further indicated that I had made no attempt to stand between Colonel Ledford and McMillan. I stated that I disagreed with the present budget and program control by the DNRO, but until it was changed, felt that it was essential that Ledford maintain a working relationship with McMillan, which I felt he had done.

3. I indicated that I had been delegated the NRO monitor role officially on 8 November 1963, and that McMillan had tried unsuccessfully to create a committee of which he would be chairman and whose terms of reference he would set. I pointed out that you had rejected this in December and indicated that the subject was now raised to indicate McMillan's reluctance to accept detailed supervision of

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this program. It was further stated that if I were in his position I would probably feel the same way, but this reluctance had not made my job any easier or more effective.

4. I indicated that Fubini, McMillan and occasionally Carter and I had begun a series of biweekly meetings of which we have now had approximately six. These meetings have become less regular during the last two months and probably is the result of the present issue before the Clifford Board. I pointed out that these meetings were characterized more by negotiation than a substantive exchange to the monitors. I said quite frankly there had been no effort on McMillan's part to make us aware of new or old NRO programs and that this was part and parcel of a natural reluctance to accept this supervision.

5. I indicated again during this preamble, my sympathy with McMillan's point of view emphasizing that NRO was being run as a closed shop and offered little to those who are supposed to be interested in it.

6. The focus then turned to tangible areas in which I had been able to observe NRO from my monitor role. Your dissatisfaction in being presented with an NRO budget at the last possible moment was mentioned along with the fact that General Carter and I had involved ourselves in preparation of the 1965 budget some weeks before its final submission to you, but not without some resistance. I indicated that the budget was presented to you at the very last moment, but in this case we had made a significant step forward in preparing you for this final brief session. The main point I stressed was that there was very little give and take between CIA and USIB, and the NRO on substantive issues which obviously should be reflected in the preparation of this budget and allocations of programs therein. I said that this was a striking absence to me since the NRO program is supposed to be responsive only to USIB direction. I stated quite clearly that to the best of my knowledge NRO had not solicited the Agency or the intelligence community in detail or in a working exchange prior to the preparation of this budget except for the small impact that Carter and I had had. I offered that this was probably a natural desire on their part to be left alone to do the job in which I had fair sympathy but could see no benefit to the program. I then made the observation that there was a

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distinct asymmetry in the way in which Colonel Ledford's CIA budget was received, examined and cut, and the way in which General Greer's large line items were approved. I pointed out for the record that TAGBOARD was the only item in Ledford's budget that was not cut at all compared with all other items that were cut significantly. I pointed out that TAGBOARD was the less well defined in all the programs and it was frankly surprising to me that it had not been cut accordingly. It was clearly stated that the point of my comments was not that the situation was wrong, but that there was an asymmetry in the way the DNRO approached the CIA and Air Force components of the budget.

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7. I then turned to the problem of major program creation, cancellation and reshuffling without our knowledge. I said this had been the most disturbing thing to me of all. As an example, I discussed the proposed 1965 budget which we had approved which contained GAMBIT at

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and a double recovery GAMBIT J development

I said we were generally aware that GAMBIT J would not be pursued as it was not economically

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feasible unless a very large number of shots were to be fired. I pointed out, however, that my next indication of what had become of the

was a finalized NRO budget book which indicates that GAMBIT is now costed as a single line item for

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and a new "System One" at

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I pointed out that we had not agreed to buy more GAMBITS and was curious to know why the GAMBIT budget had been increased. It seems that the G-3 follow-on system to GAMBIT had been established as a firm program in the meantime and was included in the

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along with the prior GAMBIT. I made it quite plain that I did not disagree with the development of G-3 and thought it was a good idea based on what little I had been able to learn about it. I did point out that I had to find out what it was and that it was now considered a going program. I re-emphasized my point that major programs costing

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were being added and subtracted without any kind of dialogue with me, and I thought, the DCI. Next came the subject of LANYARD cancellation. We had agreed at our budget session that we would postpone the launching of the second LANYARD payload and see how it worked out. I indicated how this agreement had been

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converted in several days to do a complete cancellation with remaining component parts being stored at contractors. I emphasized that an agreement to postpone a firing had been stretched to a unilateral cancellation which was not in the spirit of a joint venture.

8. I then turned to the question of COMOR/NRO relations over the past three years. I indicated that in the spring of 1963 NRO had balked at clearing all COMOR members for LANYARD and GAMBIT. Just prior to the first launchings clearances finally were granted, I believe as your responsibility. I indicated that this had caused a very serious problem for COMOR. The point I made, however, was that the rapport between COMOR and NRO was not good last year. This was further reflected in the repeated rejection by NRO of the COMOR paper on satellite reconnaissance for future systems. I indicated that I had taken the issue up soon after I came into this new job by discussing the letters with McMillan and suggesting that the time spent in writing these letters might better have been spent in working with COMOR in establishing more useful requirements of the kind they needed. I emphasized that I was making the point that NRO had not worked at all hard in establishing a viable working relationship with COMOR in 1963 and felt that the situation had not improved significantly during this year. 50X1

9. I then went on to discuss the technical adequacy of the NRO program as I had come to know it, emphasizing that my access was only partial at this time. I stated quite clearly that the [redacted] program was quite inadequate and unimaginative and had failed to do the first thing that was needed; [redacted] 50X1

[redacted] They had interested themselves instead in elaborate [redacted] development, etc. The next problem raised in the NRO program itself was the complete lack until quite recently of any forward planning on search satellites to supersede CORONA. I indicated that quite recently the NRO staff had come up with a two paper system, one on TITAN III drawn from the VALLEY Program, and the second an ATLAS/AGENA system based on LANYARD and CORONA cameras. I stated, however, that the second and immediate possibility was by no means the apparent last-word solution of the problem. We were more inclined to think of multi-band sensors to attain an improved resolution and a basic search camera. I said that for this group the merits of 50X1

the two cases were not the issue; the point is that again these last minute NRO proposals were developed without a full realization of the requirements of the intelligence community and the ultimate users of the systems.

10. As a third example, I described the CORONA improvement program in which the Air Force had tried unilaterally to respond to the Purcell Panel report with a shopping list of minor improvements whose effect was promised to be an improvement in the resolution distribution. I pointed out that the Agency had been forced to establish an independent effort and had measured this distribution for the first time. I reconstructed how a comparison of the actual distribution and the easily calculable improvements expected for the proposed Air Force modification are incommensurate. I pointed out that these Air Force changes, although acceptable, had confused the issue very badly and suggested they were in fact solving the problem when actually they were nothing more than minor modifications. I indicated that we had subsequently reached agreement with McMillan that this was the case. In summing up I made the point that the NRO organization represented a series of unilateral Air Force decisions which were seldom closely coupled to user needs and which were often wrong or lacking as a result. At this point Clifford interrupted to ask me if the Air Force had taken unilateral action with respect to CORONA. I stated quite clearly they had in the case of the CORONA improvement program and had dropped a large brick. He and other members of the Board were quite surprised to hear this especially as it preceded the latter more eloquently phrased attempts to take over the CORONA program itself.

11. I then, in conclusion, made the following basic points in very cryptic form:

a. NRO as we now know it is basically an Air Force institution.

b. As a joint venture by the CIA and Air Force NRO has been a failure in my view.

c. As a joint venture NRO will not succeed where it is and with the present agreement.

d. NRO voices and rejects supervision as much as possible.

e. NRO has a clear asymmetric attitude for Air Force and CIA programs.

f. NRO has made no effort to date to sell itself and its programs to the DCI, CIA and USIB.

g. NRO is one of the competing elements in an institutional bureaucratic war.

h. I said quite frankly I was not quite sure we would solve any of the problems by transferring the roles of the Air Force and CIA.

i. If both CIA and the Air Force are to stay in the National Reconnaissance Program there must be a change in their sighting or an agreement which regulates it.

j. We must find more effective ways to make our management structure and supervise its activities.

k. We must target and delegate functions and the budget.

12. The group was quite interested and asked a number of questions. Clifford asked me specifically what solutions I would propose and whether I thought CIA should continue to run CORONA. I responded that the decision was really whether the U. S. wanted the insurance of two groups working on satellite programs. The money to be spent is the same, the price to be paid is one of bureaucratic competition of two agencies in the same business. I said for my money it was a lucky thing there had been competition thus far and we owed much of our pictures to that competition; that while the Air Force had a recent success with GAMBIT, they had wasted a billion dollars on SANOS and were not yet in a position to demand a sole source contract according to my standards. I said that I thought in planning there was no reason why the Agency could not be in the satellite

business, and that it represented absolutely essential insurance for performance in the present environment. I went on to state that if one accepted the necessity for both CIA and the Air Force to be in the satellite development business then the only feasible fault line is that provided by the division between search and spotting systems. I pointed out that Greer had an already developed technology of taking snapshots from orbit and should be encouraged in that line of work. I emphasized to the group, however, that the search problem was quite different as a basic technology and called for different techniques and skills. The group was quite interested in this point and it bears further emphasis to them. I said that even if both programs were given to the Air Force I would hope that the Air Force would establish independent teams to work on these two problems and their corresponding techniques and insure continuity in each one. I said that I voted personally on the present FULCRUM solution for CIA until the Air Force winning streak is much longer.

13. Mr. Langer asked me why I had not pretested previously that McMillan had taken unilateral program and budget actions and had failed to inform us. I pointed out that I had tried to maintain a working relationship with McMillan and lodging protests were sure to destroy any basis we might have to no good end. I said that what we were running up against was a natural reluctance to accept this much help in framing and running the NRO program. One of the other gentlemen asked me if the problem was the arrangement. I said I thought it was a little of both, but basically the arrangement. I pointed out that Charyk and Scoville had great problems that had become personalized between them and McMillan and I were having essentially the same troubles. I said I was pleased that McMillan and I had not personalized the problems, which represented basically an institutional disagreement. They were all quite pleased to hear this statement. I then stated that I thought it was absolutely essential that this group and the DCI, Secretary of Defense and the President partition this field and put it to bed so that people like McMillan and myself and our technical people could go back to work on reconnaissance and stop fighting bureaucratic

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wars in the jungle. This they all received very well, especially when I emphasized that we had already burned out enough good men in this situation. We broke up on this note. In retrospect it was quite clear that Coyne had been armed for an Air Force satellite position and showed an irritation and uneasiness during my entire presentation which he made known to the members of the Board. I believe that by this very candid and straightforward presentation I raised a great many issues with the Board which they had not previously been aware of. I felt that I had a far livelier response from the Board than I had received from Baker and Doolittle the day before which is consistent with our view that their script had already been pretty well decided. Of and by itself, I doubt that the presentation has convinced anyone of the merits of our case. What it has done is raise some very substantial questions in the minds of the Board which the DCI may find useful to develop in his presentations.

Dictated But Not Read By

ALBERT D. WHEELON
Deputy Director
(Science and Technology)

(The circumstances of the
dictation have been explained
in a note from Mr. Blake to
Mr. Elder.)

cc: General Carter
Mr. Kirkpatrick
Mr. Bross

ALBERT D. WHEELON
JUN 27 1980
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